



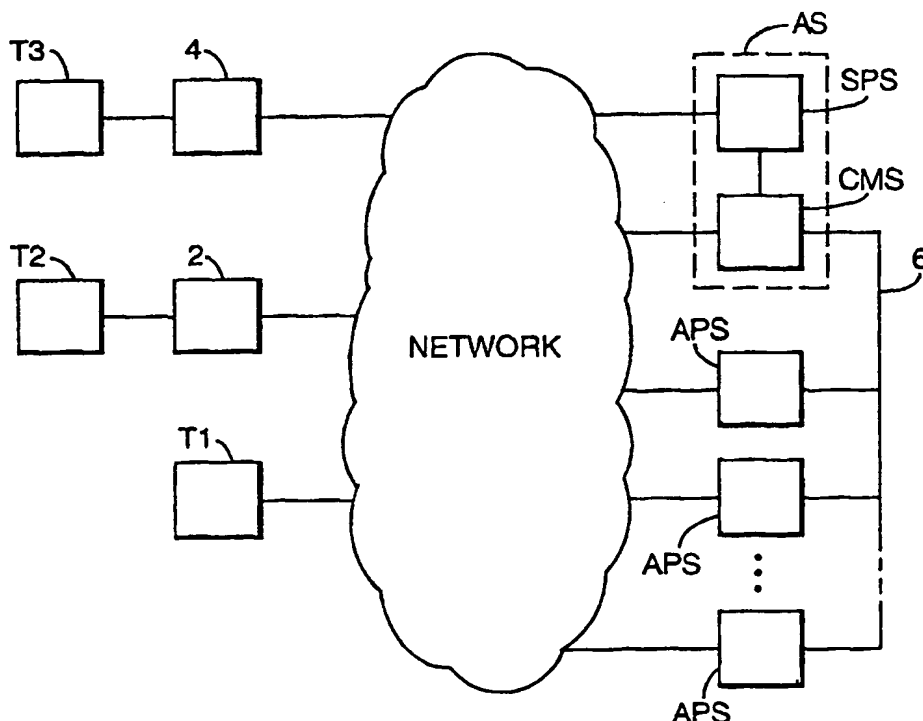
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(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): BRITISH TELECOMMUNICATIONS PUBLIC LIMITED COM- PANY [GB/GB]; 81 Newgate Street, London EC1A 7AJ (GB).			
(72) Inventors; and (75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): LEVERIDGE, Philip, Charles [GB/GB]; 30 Chestnut Close, Rushmere, Ipswich, Suffolk IP5 7ED (GB). STRANGE, Michael [GB/GB]; 36 Chatsworth Crescent, Ipswich, Suffolk IP2 9BY (GB). PARKINSON, David, William [GB/GB]; 36 Henley Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 3SA (GB). ROBERTS, David [GB/GB]; 7 Rowanhayes Close, Ipswich, Suffolk IP2 9SG (GB). KENNING, Michael, John [GB/GB]; BT Laborato- ries, Martlesham Heath, Ipswich, Suffolk IP5 7RE (GB). TIBBITT-EGGLETON, Robert, Ian [GB/GB]; Hillcrest Estuary Crescent, Shotley Gate, Ipswich IP9 1QA (GB).		Published With international search report. Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.	

(54) Title: DATA COMMUNICATIONS

(57) Abstract

An authentication server (AS) is provided which stores authentication details of authorised users, and a list of currently-authenticated users. A number of application servers (APS) are connected to the authentication server (AS), to allow the application servers (APS) to check the current authentication status of a user (T1, T2, T3) which requests service by the application servers (APS). There is also provided a method of authenticating a user for access via a terminal (T1, T2, T3) connected by an Internet Protocol connection to a Web server (APS), said method comprising: storing authentication details of authorised users; performing authentication of a user with reference to said stored authentication details; transmitting an identifier for the user's terminal (T1, T2, T3) to said terminal (T1, T2, T3) for storage thereon, the identifier being transmitted in such a manner that the identifier is transmitted by said user terminal (T1, T2, T3) with document requests directed at said Web server (APS); storing status data indicating said identifier to be an identifier of a terminal (T1, T2, T3) of a currently authenticated user; and allowing said Web server (APS) to access said status data in order to check the authentication status of a user on receipt of a document request containing said identifier.



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